BOW OF BURNING GOLD

By

E. MERRILL ROOT

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BY E. MERRILL ROOT

Bow of Burning Gold (1929)
Lost Eden (1927)

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ROBERT PACKARD & COMPANY

CHICAGO

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To

ALSA LANDON ROOT

"Honour, anger, valour, fire;
A love that life could never tire,
Death quench or evil stir,
The mighty master
Gave to her."

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I

"Bring me my Bow of Burning Gold,
Bring me my Arrows of Desire!"

ESOTERIC

The day I watched my field new-sown
It seemed inert:
Green fountains and plumed rockets lay
In calm brown dirt.

The strong sure patience of the earth
Filled the quiet corn—
Quiet the golden caskets lay
Whence Spring is born.

Yet even then beneath the mould
Stirred stalk and blade—
The golden coals of emerald flame,
The hawks of jade.

But all men hurried by my field
(Or trampled thru):
They walked above the Spring's Green Dawn—
And never knew!

PRAYER FOR DREADFUL MORNING

Long have I loved the terrible clouds that loom
Like galleons of the Armada of the air
Whose carronades flame golden in the gloom,
Shattering houses like some wild corsair.
And I have loved the baying suns that chase
Night, the grey wolf, before their gorgeous pack
In view-halloo across the void of space—
The golden wolf-hounds of the zodiac.
Better the thunder's tocsin, and the torch
Of lightning, and the tempest's *Carmagnole*—
Better the hounds of flame whose great jaws scorch
Earth's tawny outer soil, Man's inner soul—
Bursting in Dreadful Morning on our gloom,
Than that the world should stay a stuffy room!

BURNING BUSH

The sun blooms
  Like a white-hot flower—
Then the winter glooms
  Of the night have power.

Against every brook
  Like a woodland otter
In a wild nook,
  The World's a plotter;
In the ferny brake
  Its plunge and lapse
Winter will take
  In his silver traps.

Each rose would climb—
  A silken sun—
Till it burns sublime
  Like the Golden One;

But ironic earth
  Makes the thorny stem
Ladder—and fetter
  At heaven's hem.

The fireflies whirl
  In a twinkle of flight
Like finches that swirl
  Thru Lilliput's night . . .
But the fowler, Winter,
  Will catch, I know,
The golden birds
  In a net of snow.

Life is a wild hawk
  Plumed for the sky—
Earth clips his pinions
  Lest he fly.
And Nature is
  A Burning Bush
But to God, the Flame,
  The ash says "Hush!"

* * * *

And I, Alas,
  What indeed am I?—
The suns that pass
  From a darkling sky . . .
The singing brooks
  That the days congeal
Till their wildest nooks
  Find a gag of steel!

My life is a rose
  That the green leaves crowd—
One crimson sun
  Amid emerald cloud . . .
One bird with silken
  Flame for feathers,
That forever and ever
  A green cord tethers.

In the huge and careless
  Night that lies
Over my life
  There are gay fireflies;

But how petty, how brief,
  Is the summer of flesh,
Till the heart knows grief
  Like the blizzard's mesh!

My spirit's a hawk
  Whose stormy plumes
Are forever clipped
  By this world's dooms.

Like Nature, my flesh
  Is a Burning Bush—
Toward golden birth
  The fierce flames push;
In my body smoulder
  But seldom blaze
The dancing Flames
  Under ashen days.

How shall my heart
  Endure to live?
How answer Death's dark
  Imperative?

* * * *

I only know
That Life's deep good
Is the Fire whose glow
Is the sun-in-wood:
In Earth's wooden night
It is Life to gain
Immortal Light—
Thru mortal pain.

Therefore I seek
The burning petals
Of the suns that pique
The night that settles;
Out of the dark earth
Of my hours
Shall grow the Splendors
And the Powers.

I would be the silver
Brook that goes
Like a wild thing scorning
The traps of prose.

I would be a garden's
  Crimson flag
That flares superb
  From its leafy crag.

I scorn the blight
  Of our darkened sky—
I will star Earth's night
  Like a quick firefly:
For a brilliant moment—
  Tho Winter come—
I will whirl for the heart's
  Millenium.

A hawk earth-bound
  But irreconciled—
The free profound
  Of my heart still wild—
Conscript of Earth,
  But the sun's recruit—
Let my fierce wings ache
  Sky-resolute!

I will be a brand
  Not plucked from the burning:
I seek the Hand
  (With my heart's red yearning)
That shall toss my dull wood
  Into the rush
And splendor of Life,
  The Burning Bush.

O Flame consuming
  But unconsumed!
O Splendor blooming
  With darkness plumed!
Under the ash
  Of circumstance
Kindle the surge
  Of suns that dance!

Time makes us tame—
  O make us bolder!
Till tomorrow we flame
  Where today we smoulder.
O kindle in us
  The Light's renewal!
Make of our flesh
  Thy golden fuel!

STORM CENTAUR

The clouds are shaken like the silver mane
Of a fierce Centaur, and the very ground
Trembles beneath the flashing hoofs of rain.

Over our cloud-tall cities he will bound
For playful hurdles, and the forests seem
Like meadow-grass beneath his fierce hoofs' sound.

His lusty chaos, his wild roar and gleam,
Wake the dull earth to splendor and urge once more:
So, to a tired man, comes a mighty dream.

Now to an earth grown tame he will restore
Apocalypse in silver metaphor.

Hail to you, Centaur from the wilderness!
For you are fierce, and terrible, and vast;
Your silver hoofs fall with a tidal stress.

You come from chaos whence the protoplast
Burst in red lava of the flesh: my heart
Is the bronze drum of your encomiast.

I will go forth with you—august, apart,
Aloof from men: I'll toss my arms and shout:
My spirit leaves its four walls, for the smart

And drench of the world's tempests: I go out
From all the spirit's rooms and roofs: I gain
Earth's open roads, and all Life's roar and rout.

While dull men cower from the hoofs of rain,
I grasp for bridle the Storm's wind-flung mane!

Like Sans Culottes who chant a *Ca-Ira*—
Or silver Maenads—now the great winds leap:
Bacchantes mounted on Niagara.

The strong oaks huddle like scared emerald sheep
Before the trampling Centaur cosmos-bidden.
His hoof-prints scar the cleft road roaring-deep.

The tossing splendor of his mane has hidden
The very sun—airy Yosemite
Around the sky's great bonfire. Who has ridden

Such might and music, surge and ecstasy?
Who dares mount bareback on Eternity?

Earth is Beethoven now: now agony
Wrestles with joy—rhythms of discord make
From mighty conflict mightier unity.

The sluggish earth that now the great hoofs shake
Is the facsimile of my heart: I too
Would feel within me all the tempests wake.

O Storm sweep inward!—break into the blue
Skies of our lives! Shatter the petty calm
That dulls our days: the soul has need of you!

Into our Time's caprice of bale or balm,
Break once again with Whitman's roaring psalm!

Today I'll mount the Centaur of the storm,
And twist my fingers in his cloudy mane,
And ride superb across Earth's multiform

Forests and cities—like the drag and stain
Of muddy grass. Mounted on music . . . hurled
As from a stormy catapault of rain,

Like a wild arrow roaring over the world,
To the target of Eternity I'll go . . .
A banner of storm that never shall be furled . . .

Allegro for the earth's adagio . . .
Splendor and strength to shake the world's dull woe!

INTO NATURE

Tho clouds may grow like silver trees,
Their roots must be the steadfast seas:
The lightning is their crimson fruit—
But the deep ocean is their root.
June's fire may kindle from the spark
Of any rose-bud—but the dark
And smouldering earth itself became
The mighty fuel of that flame.

All things we know most strange and high—
The earth that burns, the seas that fly . . .
The transubstantiation whence
Clay turns to a magnificence . . .
Wonders too common to be strange—
The calm Apocalypse of change . . .
All these transpire beyond our ken
In depths and breadths too vast for men.

And should you yearn for ecstasies—
The spirit's clouds, the flying trees—
Then turn and sink your roots again
Into the seas beneath the brain.
And if from out your body's dark
You wish the rose-bud for a spark,
Such fire can only be his fruit
Who has the Universe for root!

NOAH

I wish I had lived in the time of Noah, in the
antediluvian age,
When the seven striped seas broke loose like tigers
that rend their cage;
When the clouds were the gargoyle spouts of
heaven whence roared Niagara,
And all the cosmic cataracts came to cry to the
earth, "Aha!"
For Noah (who was not modern at all), he thought
the Flood a lark—
As a small boy builds a holiday raft, he built
himself an Ark.
The rains came down, and the seas came up, but
said Noah: "When all is done,
This water will make a pleasant drink for my
little friend, the Sun."

And Noah he saw Methuselah drown (who
wouldn't believe in the Flood):
The billows worried the poor old man as a bull
might chew its cud.
And Noah was sorry and yet serene, and he
offered his condolence;
But he thought, "I always knew that Hell is paved
with Common Sense!"

And he turned to where an elephant stood, and he clapped him on the back,
And he said: "The earth is merely an Ark on the Flood of the Zodiac;
And tho the waters of Death roar high around its sides today,
It shall float like a sun till the Flood goes down on the shores of the Milky Way."

The skies came down, and the seas came up, till the stars loomed large and clear
Like fiery icebergs on the waves across which Noah must steer;
The tips of the last Himalayas shook like bell-buoys over the sea
To tell of the final shoal of earth—then vanished sullenly.
The lightnings beat a chaff of foam from the sea like golden flails;
And the waterspouts went up the dark like the breath of cosmic whales.
But Noah, he turned to a kangaroo, and you might have heard him say:
"I never held with the Wise who thought that Life is a bit cliché."

God rubbed the waters across the earth like a wet rag over a slate,
And all the debits charged against Man were certainly liquidate.

The mountains were made into mole-hills then to confound Man utterly:
For forty days and forty nights the world was all at sea.
Then the playful waves went hunting Noah like a pack of shaggy hounds,
Baying the doom of their view-halloo to the crags of the astral bounds.
But Noah he sat on the deck of the Ark like a cougar in a tree,
And he told them: "Bay till your throats are hoarse—but you shall not frighten me!"

Like a herd of leaden Pampas bulls the round of the waters roared;
The trampled rag of the earth lay still like a dead man they had gored.
They tossed the Ark upon their horns till it almost hit the moon;
They bellowed deep in their burly throats hell's terrible murder-tune.
But Noah he played with the hornéd waves like heaven's matador:
He said, "I am at sea in fact—but not in metaphor.
I know that the bulls shall be bound again in the stanchions of the hills,
And the rose shall take their pasture-ground for her airy domiciles."

The billows broke their way thru earth like the
share of a silver plow—
They shook the stars like golden apples upon the
cloudy bough.
An upper mill-stone made of lead, the sea went
round and round;
And beneath, on the nether stone of earth, the Men
of the World were ground.
And Shem and Ham and Japheth sat upon the
deck of the Ark:
Their thoughts were of such simplicity that they
made no remark.
But Noah in a dreamy ecstasy leaned over the
starboard rail
And shook with a gentle inward mirth as the moon
bumped into a whale.

Said Noah: "The People of Common Sense lie
certainly whole-seas-under;
They would not hear—but I think they heard—
the feet of the great tides thunder.
The things that they knew could never be are, and
the things that they knew are not:
The fishes swim where the birds once flew thru
the boughs of the apricot.
All they who were wise with the wit of the world
lie dull in the nets of ooze:
The crabs make fairytale palaces out of their
empty shoes.

But we who were dreamers carry with us the
song of the Nightingale—
And also (to prove us practical) the Elephant
and the Snail."

For forty days and forty nights the world was
all at sea—
But Noah and the beasts that Adam had named
were cozy as they could be.
Tho hell came up, and heaven came down, and
earth was their mixing-bowl,
The Ark went floating across the Flood as light as
the white moons roll.
And at last the sun came out of the clouds and
began to drink the sea,
And the Ark it settled on Ararat like a bird on a
granite tree.
And said Noah to a Duck-billed Platypus, "Don't
worry, my little friend!—
There'll be water enough for you and me tho
earth's hyperboles end."

The day went marching up the sky with the sun
for a flag of flame:
It was the antediluvian sun, but it did not seem
the same—

It was strange as the sun that Adam had seen first
bloom on an azure stalk.
And Life, new-drawn on the black-board, Death,
was a sketch in golden chalk.
The trees (that had been a giant's sea-weed)
were flowers in the path of the sun;
And the world that was old and ended—was the
world that was just begun.
Said Noah: "The playful tigers that hunted Man
lie curled
In the sunny cage of the hills again—and Man
survives the World!"

ON THE DUNES

Let earth have her ancient way—
Sun and sand and wind and spray—
On the lonely dunes today.

Trampling silver dust of spumes
Strides the wind: he wears the glooms
Of vast purple clouds for plumes.

Mightily Lake Michigan
Hurls his white diluvian
Wolves across the narrow span.

Mournful grass like huddled sheep
Cowers from the roar and sweep
Of the waves and winds that leap.

And the sand (that once was proud
Rock) lies desolate and cowed,
Broken to the level crowd.

And one tree, a twisted gnome,
Rises from the monochrome
Leprous silver of his home.

There in primal joy I lie
Underneath a savage sky
Where the pluméd clouds go by.

Joyful on the trampled verge
Of two worlds, I lie and urge
In my soul their shock and surge.

For my spirit wins elation
And majestic affirmation
Best from stormy desolation.

There in primal loneliness
Let me lie amid the stress
Of the cosmic emphasis.

Let me hear forevermore
Life, of which I am the shore,
On my body's beaches roar!

Not for me earth's plenilune—
But the wild white crescent moon
Of the beach that ends the dune.

FOR OLD INTELLECTUALS

Earth is no blackboard on whose vacancy
A moron writes (it may be once or twice)
A mere chalk-scribble of humanity
For the eraser of an Age of Ice.
Nor are the stars the cog-wheels of the sky,
Turning the cosmos like an iron machine;
Nor men a reel of shadows clicking by—
Cheap moving-pictures on an azure screen.
No!—Earth is a brown horse with a mane of trees
That gallops round the mesa of the sun:
To him a cyclone is a morning breeze—
The Milky Way a field in which to run.
And Man is like the farmer's boy who rides
Bareback and shouting thru the morning's tides!

STRENGTH OF ADAM

Mine be the men who go by thru the mist like
great red flags—
Men who are joyous suns in the world's great
level of night—
Men who do the talk of the world and the work
of the world,
And are themselves the life of the world and the
world's great light.

Mine be no Popes of Art in Ivory Vaticans,
giving
Bulls of the partial church of Death Everlasting,
who eat—
Scornful—the body and blood of humanity
broken to feed them,
Preying upon the Christ of Life that is broken
for meat.

Humbly I would return with the great grey Jesus
of Russia—
With Tolstoi go down till I feel the dark-humored
truth of the soil;

There, close to the roots of the golden corn and
the tasselled roses,
I would take up the World—Man's ancient Cross
of Toil.

I would find basic strength in the patient corbels
of Labor
Bowed with the weight of the sky: forever like
stone they stand
And bear, majestic as corbels, strong on their
shoulders forever
The architrave of the sky with the frieze of the
sea and the land.

I weary of children born to the purple who cry
for the moon—
The vital affirmers of death, the lethal deniers of
birth—
Supermen doing the talk of the world and
complaining in ease,
While the simplemen do the work of the world
with courage and mirth.

Mine be the simplemen—they who are tamers and
playmates of lightning,
Whose prose is the golden death that runs thru
the glass-green wire,
The wire where the babble and epic of Man
outstrip the sun

On the backs of Niagara's lion-cubs of terrible
fire. . .

Simplemen fishing for cod on the Banks in the
web of the fog—
Theseus in oil-skins, lost in the Labyrinth, hearing
the roar
Of terrible bulls that stamp thru the night with
muscles of steam
Like fiercer Minataurs iron-horned to trample
and gore . . .

Or the men who go down to the roots of the
hills a mile underground
To set free the sun, our golden Lord, enchanted
in coal;
Or the quiet riders of stallions of steam who
stare all day
At a roaring world forever flung up like a great
wheel's roll . . .

And the sky-coated Mercury bearing the Word
thru sun and thru snow;
And the women who bake the daily bread of the
world forever;
And overalled Hercules bruising an emerald Hydra's
heads,
Or lifting the railroad across the hills with his
back for a lever . . .

Laughter like sunlight thru shadows, earth's simple
and fathomless humor—
Common as dandelions, lovely as dandelions—such
is their mirth;
Their strength is the shelterless oak-tree's, whose
roots go into the granite:
They ask no covert of glass from the cyclones and
suns of the earth!

Theirs is the hammer of cyclone, and theirs the
sickle of lightning;
They are suns like golden lions forever hunting
the night;
They are the patient branches whence flowers a
terrible beauty—
The Burning Bush of Life that startles the void
with Light.

ODE TO LIGHTNING

I

The August heat lies heavy on the world:
It broods above us, and it stifles me.
Dispirited armies, their green banners furled,
The corn-fields droop in brittle apathy
Of death-in-life. And now the summer fruit
Smoulders, wasp-bitten, on the dusty bough;
The lakes, like blue flowers, wither toward the root;
The songless birds keep their green cages now.

And in the city the vast factories,
Those Minataurs that feed on anthracite
For ebon grain (and on Man's agonies)
Throb with heat's anguish and the aching light.
The fierce air vibrates over the sullen roll
Of dwindling traffic: even strong men swoon ,
Or shut in curtained rooms forgo their goal
Within the City of the Dreadful Noon.

In sun-scorched city and in sun-struck field,
All earth is bound within a red-hot zone:
Ruined, indeed, seems every golden yield;
Like lakes, our spirits wither toward the stone.

Before the Minataurs of steel and brick
Man is a Theseus impotent with despair;
Noon's height and heat have dazed and dulled
the quick
Traffic within Man's every thorofare.

City and field lie supine like the prey
Struck down, half-dead, beneath the terrible paw
Of the fierce sun-maned lion of the day:
Now I and all men sink in sullen awe.
And few of us in our despair can know
The future storm within the present sky,
Which yet into the lion's heart shall throw
The lightning's fierce and golden assegai.

II

But on the far horizon lie and loom
Fantastic mountains now—a nebula
Of airy purple cliffs—the joyous gloom
Whence soon shall fall the rain's Niagara.
And like a Titan diver down the steep
Cataract of the rain, the lightning's glimmer
Into the roaring waves of air shall leap
And cross their torrents like a golden swimmer.

Or then like sowers striding on the hills
Lightnings shall strew, for silver seed, the showers—
Till Earth (a garden full of withered rills)
Blossoms with pools again, those azure flowers.

Or like a cosmic mower, the vast storm
Shall swing its golden scythe across the heat,
Until the clouds, amorphous, multiform,
Shall fall to earth like swathes of silver wheat.

O lightning, fruit and crisis of the air!—
Precipitance of slowly-ripened seed—
Solution of the season's *laissez-faire*—
A month dynamic in an instant's deed!
The world and I are wistful for your shock:
To feel you stirring in the stagnant sky
Terribly like an eagle from his rock,
Yet gayly like a golden butterfly!

The sullen violence of the atmosphere
Needs flaming ecstasy of swift release;
At last the brooding August days must veer
From sterile quiet to creative peace.
Archangel with the lightning for your wings,
Before your onset all the sky is torn!—
Yet you have care for quiet and tender things:
Milk for the mouth-roots of the hungry corn.

Therefore, you clouds, galleys with golden oars,
Row to some new Lepanto of the sky!
Or come like Sans Culottes who storm the doors
Of the earth's Bastille, roaring in splendor by
With toss of fiery bayonets! Earth rocks
With jubilation as the tempest comes:

The thunder strikes salvation's hour like clocks—
The lightnings are their golden pendulums!

III

And so I call, both for myself and earth,
Upon the lightning for deliverance—
Out of the World's grey clouds, in golden birth
The spirit's flame and noble arrogance!
O heat within my heart, within my world,
Too long, too long indeed, you stifle me!
Soon on your dull surrender shall be hurled
The bright salvation of catastrophe.

O Lightning of the World! on you I call—
The symbol of the Fiery Tree that blooms
Miraculous, august, and integral
Out of the cloudy mould of this world's glooms.
O Lightning, rive the heat within my heart!
Crush me, if need be, in the confligration
Of falling white-hot trees—but break apart
The heart's sterility, the world's stagnation!

BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR

Time's new Aladdins, we amass
Fierce stars, like flowers, under glass:
We shut, to light our cities' trouble,
Niagara within a bubble.
We tunnel earth's oblivion
To mine the black, transmuted sun;
We harpoon earth till oil leaps out
Like subterranean whales that spout;
And the Atlantic's roar and curdle
Is but our wingéd horse's hurdle.

Princes who found the Flying Horse,
The Roc's egg, or the Genie's force,
Would shudder at our stranger spells
And Nature-breaking miracles.
Now our Alladin's Lamp, the Earth,
If we but rub it, brings to birth
The Genie, Nature, for our slave
To fetch or build the things we crave.
Leviathans upon which we
Make brooks of Sinbad's strangest sea;
The Carpet on which we have flown
(A continent for our mile-stone);

Prince Ahmed's magic glass that sees
The microbes—or the Pleiades,
Are marvels common to our mood—
The paradox grown platitude.

We tell the Genie: "Give us things!"
We seek the fragile rigid wings
As of a fierce yet docile bird
Whereon at last we make absurd
Molehills of mountains; or the bright
Bubbles of silver from whose height
We read the cryptic Boreal Pole
Like hieroglyphs on a parchment scroll;
Dreadnoughts (those braggadocios
Spoken in iron); radios
That stutter into harmonies;
The iron field-moles of the seas
That take us living thru the dark
Salt abysses of the shark;
Mazdas—like parlor-jaguars . . .
Domesticated Morning Stars;
Buildings that strike the stars' white reel—
Upward Niagaras of steel . . .
These are Aladdin's will today:
The Genie hastens to obey.

For we have found a talisman
More subtle than the Alcoran
Or Seal of Solomon that held
Angel and Demon word-compelled:

The talisman that we have taken
From that strange fairy, Roger Bacon—
The spell of Science, whence earth stands
A servant waiting our commands.
Science, the brain at last grown human,
The Common Sense becoming common,
Makes Man (we think) the Earth's Dictator:
Earth's creature, now, turns Earth's creator!

But shall we will to build in air
Kingdom of Man—or Vanity Fair?
The Earth becomes our Kingdom now,
And shall we hang above its brow
The Bright and Morning Star, or proud
Futility of Matter's cloud?

We call Earth's oil, and steam, and steel,
And lightning, like great hounds to heel:
And we do well—for surely they,
Our faithful dogs, should bound and bay
At Time and Space and Death and Night
And hunt them to their holes in fright.
But hearts still dark in savagery,
Brutal with greed and cruelty,
May urge the dogs upon their brother—
And hunt not Nature, but each other.

The spell called Science, is an axe—
The tool wherewith a man attacks

The tangled jungles of Earth's dooms—
Arboreal spiders spinning glooms:
He breaks their dusky web of shadows
And opens Earth for roads and meadows.
A child who plays with the same tool
Lets his life out in a red pool.
Science will hitch Man's mighty car
To suns—or to a falling star.
The Genie will build highways well
Either to heaven or to hell.
Nature is like an automobile—
Passive, for Man must hold the wheel;
And he can set the hood to scale
The vistas of the Mohawk Trail,
Or turn it with a drunken twitch
Toward splinters fiery in the ditch.

When our young men shall dream nightmares,
And our old men see only wares
To sell, not visions beatific,
What good that Things grow more prolific?

Desire and vision, purpose, will—
These aim the Genie's patient skill:
Mere brains release a subtler brute:
We must have targets ere we shoot
Arrows of Longing. Shall we throw
Waste arrows with our whole life's bow

To shatter on the rocks, or pass
To rot inert in idle grass,
Or (madder still) to fall and part
The crimson cycles of a heart?
Life is a bow that Man must aim
If he would bag immortal game!

Whenever Man shall dream no dream
Science will perish. Still the gleam
Of inner sun on outer clay
Must make the splendor of life's day.
The Genie of the Lamp has skill
And might—but neither good nor ill:
He gives Things—but he does not give
Wisdom to use them, zest to live,
The Golden Bow of Ecstasy,
The Target of Eternity.

Therefore mid mists of circumstance
We wait some bugle's arrogance
Magnificent as Yosemite
(That silver bugle royally
Set to a mountain's lips) to call
The spirit—mighty, integral—
From our ignoble generation
Toward agony and exultation:
We need above our fog of war
Again the Bright and Morning Star—
The challenge to oblivion
That heralds, and awaits, the Sun!

MACHINE AGE

Today the iron creatures of Man's attempt at Eden
Have fallen (even as Adam fell who out of clay
was kneaden):
The Adams that men shape from steel have left
the Garden now—
The sullen Cain that is the sword, the Abel of
the Plow;
The children of our simple Eve mesh in their
maker's blood;
The earth is full of Nephalim before the Second
Flood.
*(But Man might yet be master—his Kingdom yet
might come—*
*And even our Adam yet regain earth's green
Elysium.*
*We still might hear the Morning Stars that sang
when earth began,*
*If we would save Man from Machines—and save
Machines for Man.)*

Today the Mesozoic Age brings back its iron hour:
Again earth sees the Mammoth, again the
Dinasaur.

Once more the Pterodactyls and the trampling
Aurochs come;
The Mastadon regains at last his lost Millenium.
Humanity lies prostrate now before the arrogance
Of epileptic dinasaurs that have St. Vitus' dance.
(But the spirit could be master—tho it hides in
trees today,
And the nightmare beasts of Matter might walk
the Spirit's way.
If humanity would rise for life and earth its
heritage,
We yet might tame the iron beasts and win the
Human Age.)

Today the Windmills of the World (which Don
Quixote charged)
Are charging Don Quixote—and their arms are
much enlarged.
The windmills that were sluggish on the ancient
hills of Spain
Like the Commander's statue, have found their
feet again:
They traverse seas and continents, they knock the
Mad Knight down,
In Moscow, Rome, Chicago, Berlin, and
London Town.
(But if Don Quixote would but turn and charge
the mills again,
They might serve not grubbing Millers, but the
hearts of simple men.

In the mighty love of comrades the Giants and
Man might dwell,
Till the earth should make one music like the heart
of Israfel.).

Today the iron Atlas who should bear upon his back
The steadfast burden of the globe across the zodiac,
Becomes on Sinbad's shoulders an Old Man of
the Sea—
Till round the island of the earth Man wanders
sullenly.
Or Atlas (the good giant) has turned to Blundabore
Who grinds our bones to make his bread—and
holds the sky no more.
(But Sinbad yet might rest the earth upon the
Old Man's back;
And Blundabore who bludgeons us might meet
with Little Jack:
Machines need not make Man their throne, nor
Man's despair their grave:
Machines may yet save others—so themselves they
yet may save.)

Therefore let us turn our Adam from the pride
and power that damn
Until at last the dynamo shall lie down with the
lamb.
Let us tame the Mesozoic hell where we have gone
like Dante,

Till we make of Matter's Dinasaur the Spirit's
Rocinante.
Let us at last refute the road that calls itself
the goal,
And bring the cogwheel night of things the sun
which is the soul.
Then Man shall not be the pavement where the
wheels of Matter run,
And Machines put in their place shall find their
place within the sun;
Then Man (who is Prometheus by a clockwork
Vulture riven)
Shall descend from Matter's Caucasus—and steal
the Fire from Heaven!

EPIC CITIES

(For Rolfe Humphries)

The primal earth, immense and resolute,
Out of her might and calm bore Titan fruit:
Mountains and valleys, cataracts of trees,
Yosemite and moon-obeying seas,
The Mississippis that are azure-paved
Highways for hemispheres, glaciers that laved
Continents with their stony water, lakes
Like flowers a Brobdignagian morning wakes . . .
As if Earth wrote an epic,—sprawling, rude,—
On the brown pages of her solitude.

And still Man reads earth's ancient Iliad:
Man always will. And yet, for good or bad,
Thinking her primal poetry cliché,
He seeks a newer idiom today:
A Titan (tho as yet a Titan child),
He turns to his own will, irreconciled

From earth, from basic earth and all her ways;
He seeks to write today no paraphrase,
But his own epic where the verses run
In iron rhythms upward toward the sun.

The cities are Man's epic. Huge, superb,
Sordid, majestic, terrible, from curb
To coping they are built of stone and steel—
Steadfast as mountains . . . full of the roar and reel
Of floods and cyclones. O magnificent
For beauty and for roaring power, blent
With tragedy and terror! Here by day
Sky-scrapers stand like lions above their prey—
Tawny, foursquare, and proud . . . and yet by night
Turn delicate towers of tremendous light
Butterfly-soft and fairy-luminous.
Beauty of power, terror of power, thus
Stand over Man to lacerate and bless
His eager heart which makes them both. The stress
Of iron tides of traffic ebbs and flows . . .
The thunder of commerce and pleasure ever grows . . .
Speed gets in its own way, and luxury
Becomes a hardship and an agony . . .

Man is a poet in creative pain
Where power and impotence together strain
In noble agony—earth's greatest mood
Of anguish for achievement's interlude.
And in that anguish cities cannot be
Seen with the wisdom of tranquility.

They are, at best, a phantasy and blur
Within a giant's dream: the fret and stir
Of our new life as yet transcend our brain.
Meanwhile, Man builds—and does not build in vain.

For on what we now build, grown to be part
(At last) of earth and Man's own brain and heart,
The Sons of Man may build a Future yet,
Triumphant over all the bulk and fret
Of earth or city; and on both may rear
The spirit's space-transcending hemisphere.

Therefore cry *Yes* to cities! Shout that Man
Builds toward the sun with girder and with span!
Accept the iron poetry of Today—
But see the far goal past the obvious way.
See, with the deep mind's candid irony
Man's sordid chaos and steel tragedy;
And yet see also with what splendid urge
Upward the cataract cities leap and surge—
See how upon Earth's epic, Man writes new
Tremendous poems of what *Man* can do:
Into the constellation-glimmering dark
He swings aloft the splendor of the arc;
Over the Hudson (now an episode)
He flings the airy epic of his road;
Above earth's tallest trees—now dwarfed to ferns—
His granite-rooted building looms or burns;
Into the golden rhythm of the suns,
Upward the iron Poem of Power runs!

NOVEMBER

The crimson banners that October flung
Against the skies, are fallen; and the woods
Like clouds of Fall's delaying sunset hung
Above the weeks, are ended interludes.
November comes—and all the trees are bare,
A metal smoke upon the hills, a mist
Of lavender in morning's frosty air,
Mingled of iron and of amethyst.
Forged from October's fires, an iron earth
Of granite new-revealed mid shrunken trees . . .
Of widened fields . . . stands out: the mighty girth
That underlay the Summer's phantasies.
November means that earth has reached at length
The basic beauty that is space and strength.

II

"Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!"

TO AMERICA

"Ours is the Hairy Ape among the Nations—
Ours is the Continent of Dreadful Night!"
(Such are the angers and the accusations
Of your own sons—and truly they are right.)
For I know well the desolate Labrador
Where blood-red sunsets glare thru gaunt rock-rents:
You are (to drop all glamorous metaphor)
Surely the saddest of the continents.
I know, I know too well, America,
How—reckless, cruel, lovable, heterodox—
The river of your blood's Niagara
Roars down magnificent—upon the rocks.
Yet I see also—past the Ape's dull Night—
Prometheus, and the Dreadful Morning's light!

SON OF COLUMBUS

Columbus and Pizzaro, Lief Ericson and Drake—
Today in me, their heritor, I feel their genius wake.

Today I think of all the men who dared
the shadowy sea—
Frontiersmen of Atlantis, who found a world for me:

Of strong Hernando Cortez, Spain's beagle fierce
for prey,
Who carried Christ to Mexico—and harried gold
away;

Balboa, by Pacific seas restless in Darien;
The Pilgrims, iron swords of God; the
social-visioned Penn;

Jesuits who sought the Cross they brought, to
spread Christ's Seigneury;

La Salle, who down the central flood maintained
the Fleur de Lys. . .

And I think also of their sons whom equal hearts
have sent,
Anonymous Conquestadors, to storm a continent,—

Who warred with frost and forest, with miles and
wolves and men;
Who made safe homes—and left them, restless
to roam again;

Who crossed the Appalachians, where Boone had led,
and found
The blue-grass . . . for a sunny farm . . . or on a
sunless mound;

Who in Rhode Island or in Maine left calloused
hills, to go
And scatter forts and farms and sons beyond
Ontario;

Who built log huts in Illinois, and left them soon—
to scar
The horizon with a plow-share hitched to the
evening star . . .

Thru Kansas, thru Nebraska, the Pawnees saw
them pass—
To golden California . . . to golden pyres of grass . . .

To painted drouth of deserts . . . to towns that
cyclones strew . . .
To the Apaches' arrows and the thunder of the
Sioux . . .

For they were still Columbus' sons: their blood
cried "On!" and "On!"
Until they found—and lost—their goal, where
surf ends Oregon.

* * * * * *

And now at last we have explored and tamed a
hemisphere:
Where once their oxen plodded, our Cadillacs
career.

Their covered wagons crawled in dust: our
Pullmans roar on steel;
The sea that tossed their galleons has felt a
Dreadnought's keel.

Their wild dream is our common fact: Passage
to India
Up watery stairs of Gatun . . . thru broken
Panama . . .

Beneath their earth's broad forehead we change
the very dreams:
Where it was dumb with deserts, it murmurs now
with streams.

From plains that held no food for fire our coal
and oil are torn;
Now earth that spawned the cougar is earth that
spawns the corn.

We set (where their earth shouted in flood and
cyclone once)
Chicago—nightly waking fantastic hells of suns.

Where prairies smouldered into smoke beneath the
bisons' feet,
We pour broad seas whose fish are loaves—the
rooted tides of wheat.

Their bridgeless rivers guide like flags the eagle's
avatars;
We shackle their Niagara to strew our streets
with stars.

Go West today . . . go North today . . . no wilderness
to clear!
The biplane and the radio have crossed the last
frontier.

At last America is won. And I, what shall I do?—
Who have no Indies now to seek—yet am
Columbus too?

I am the child of such as they; I too am pioneer:
Columbus with no ocean, Boone with no wild
frontier!

Passage to India indeed! Where, where shall wait
again
The far Pacific vision from heights of Darien?

Where shall be my New England? And where
my Florida?
Where, vaster than a continent, the New America?

TRENTON

1776—and Christmas Day!
Truceless for all that flag of truce, the snow,
Not patriots then—but scarecrow gallows' prey—
The Rebels camped beyond the crash and flow
Of the saving Delaware. Meanwhile, Howe's gay
And courtly captains danced and played the beau
(Or just for pasteboard hearts) each flambeaued
night;
And wrote bad verses on the Rebels' plight.

In Rebel camps, comrades in plight and pain,
Were soldiers from the sunny Carolines;
Laconic Yankees from the coast of Maine,
Grim as her granite, lanky as her pines;
Virginians who in hooféd hurricane
Sabred and caromed thru Cornwallis' lines;
Farmers from Cape Cod's anchor-fluke of sand;
And drawling oyestermen from Maryland.

These were but trampled salvage of defeat:
Hope was the root of a torn daffodil—
Could its gold bloom again? In fogged retreat
(When even to escape at all was skill)

They'd fled Long Island. Now in Manhattan street
The fife of British Grenadiers was shrill;
On Princeton Green the scarlet coats were gay;
In Trenton Hessian lads kept Christmas Day.

* * * * *

'Tis Christmas afternoon. A freezing glare
Of fitful rain falls over the dark roar
And craggy silver of the Delaware.
In the storm's early twilight, to the shore
Washington marches. Captain Glover's there
With boats and fishermen to swing an oar—
Men born to the Atlantic's beat and blare.
Along the shore the Continentals form
Under the bleak monotony of storm.

In skiffs, and boats, and heavy-beamed batteaus,
The men of Gloucester and of Marblehead
Piecemeal embark the army. And one rows
With oaken oar that ice transmutes to lead;
One with a pole or boat-hook thrusts the floes
Of staving ice away. Damned like the dead
Beside hell's river, but to a bleaker fate,
Meanwhile the huddled soldiers freeze and wait.

Freezing they wait upon the curdled brink
Of the broad river that roars palely by,
Where rocks of silver surge in freezing ink
When thru the clouds the dim moon chalks the sky.

They heave at wheel-spokes till the cannon sink
Into batteaus and huddle there awry;
They push the boats off, wading to their knees,
Then group and shiver in the glazing breeze.

Slowly, by meagre twos and threes and fours,
The stiffened soldiers crouch, a crowded few,
In row-boats; or they climb by perilous scores
On clumsy splay batteaus that batter thru
The silver boulders, while the formless shores
Dissolve in dark. A coughed command or two . . .
Dredge of blocked oars . . . Quick rocking thrust
of poles . . .
The grind of ice which the wild river rolls . . .

Like wounded creatures of a dream, that crawl
Thru nightmare ages which return again,
The slow boats falter with the pull and fall
Of oars ice-splintered. Still the crouching men
Endure . . . They hear the boats crunch . . . they
can crawl
And splash their way ashore . . . But once again
—Clothed in a click of glass—the oarsmen go
Thru hell's recurrence, ever to and fro . . .

Even the fitful moon as the ranks file,
Has sunk at last into the sleety West.
Yet night grows paler; in a little while
The rootsers with their frosty Yankee zest

Will crow the day up—and there's mile on mile
To march before their sleepless flesh can rest—
Can rest at least in mordant shrouds of sleet,
Futile in Trenton's Hessian-conquered street.

Yet stubborn still, they march across the night:
Past houses very peaceful in the snow,
Where dogs clank chains and bay their angry fright.
With never a word the hurrying Rebels go
Even when a night-capped farmer with a light
Gapes out and wonders whether he dreams it so,
Or whether the world's-end armies of the Lord
Are on the march with judgement spear and sword.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, in Trenton, homesick lads from Hesse,
The chessmen of an Empire's game of skill,
Remember German Christmas hearths, and guess
What presents little Oscar has . . . And still
Do Gretchen's eyes, bright at one name, confess
A lover gone? How evergreens must fill
Their cottages! They dream of beer and geese . . .
Old granny . . . and plump wives . . . and Noel's peace.

Rahl, their good colonel, trusts the Winter's wall;
He scorns the Yankees and keeps Christmas cheer.
His captains pound their empty steins, and bawl
For jolly songs and spicy floods of beer.

A Tory loyalist sends in a scrawl
(Written in perilous haste, the Rebels near):
Rahl pockets it unopened. And they sink
Lax, happy, snoring, flushed and swelled with drink.

But now comes morning in a mask of sleet:
The candles are like faded flowers of light.
A casual seargent yawns into the street—
And rubs his eyes. God! Is it dream, or sight?
Have last year's scarecrows taken to their feet
And come in mad crusade? Eyes wide, face white,
He wonders whether his poor eyes really see men's
Grim ranks . . . or whether he has delirium tremens . . .

Already Knox has cannon leashed in line
To bark—grim dogs of war—down street and square.
The Hessians, staggering up from song and stein
Or from their sleep, are mangled mid the blare
And splendor as the great guns belch and shine.
Balls, like iron horsemen, charge each thorofare.
And when the Hessians rush the guns, they fall
Coughing out blood on pavement and on wall.

Frontiersmen who have tracked the moose in Maine
And faced the fierce charge of his antlered head,
Chip from their priming-pans the clotted rain;
Take leisured aim; and send the lyric lead
To splash the life out—a laconic stain.
The wounded sob broad bubbles of blood . . . The dead

Clutch with blind fingers at the roaring darks
That gulf them thru hell shattered into sparks.

Now Greene on this side, and on that Munroe,
Close in completely on their lair-caught game;
And, like a hunted cougar crouching low,
Which twenty wounds enrage but cannot tame,
The Hessians snarl and waver to and fro
In a collapsing cage of iron and flame.
Always fresh Yankees come at a weary double:
Trenton's like hasty-pudding, all a-bubble.

Ephraham Stevens, Ebenezer Frye,
And gaunt Green Mountain Stark, with fifteen men
Make sixty Hessians throw down guns and cry
Quarter in German. Stallions in a pen,
The scorched and sobbing Hessians mill and fly.
Black belch of powder . . . sleet . . . cheers . . .
shrieks of men
In piecemeal death . . . two-language oaths . . . the roar
And pound of cannon . . . cheers . . . then shrieks
once more . . .

The Hessians drag two cannon into place
On King Street: at the havoc of the guns
Virginian lads, like hounds of battle, race
Each of them crazy-yelling as he runs . . .
Fountains of lightning flame into each face:
The iron thunderbolts, like bursting suns,

Go high and wide . . . The Hessian gunners flee
Or find Death's door, a bayonet its key.

Good captain tho bad general, brave tho rash,
Rahl long ago stamped out into the battle:
He forms his faltering soldiers mid the smash
Of ball and grape-shot and brisk rifle-rattle.
He sees them sob and stagger at the flash—
Helpless and frightened like flame-frantic cattle.
He shouts at them, he beats them with his sword—
Frederick's soldiers, now a ravelling horde!

"Back to your ranks!" (he shouts). "You, drum
and fife,
Play us a march! And let the flags advance.
They are good marksmen—skulking at the life—
But charge them with your bayonets, and one glance
At steel's enough! Charge! Give them the bare knife!"
Himself he leads the suicidal chance:
They follow him and rush the rifle-balls . . .
They halt . . . they flinch . . . they falter . . . and
Rahl falls . . .

His second-in-command lies dying too.
Death is a platitude and wounds are trite.
Turn where they will, the weary Hessians view
A thorny hedge of muskets. Shall they fight?
There is no hope of victory if they do:
Wounds are their wage, and death their perquisite.

Cold creeps thru open doors of wounds, to chill
Their gallant blood—just now so hot to kill.

A bandage on a bayonet sues for peace;
And sobered officers come parleying.
Washington's grim tho gracious: if they please,
Complete surrender is the word to bring,
Else musketry must roar its repartees.
A captain kneels to catch the whispering
Of Rahl, whose life is now a lapse of red.
Rahl breathes the bitterest word he ever said.

The eager Hessians ground their guns, or lay
Their swords upon the snow in glad reprieve
From Time's death-sentence. And with "Hip Hooray!'
The Continentals shake the clouds and heave
Hats over house-tops; and their drummers play
Mad Yankee Doodle. No one stops to grieve
For wounds or wounded: lost in Victory,
Their minds are rockets at a jubilee.

And soon (with not a single comrade dead)
They march again across the easy miles
Which were so hard that morning. From the red
Arsenal of their victory, the files
Bear bread—and powder for their muskets' bread—
Cannon—and shoes not ragged with the miles—
The uncommon common things that rebels need
Who have themselves and hungry guns to feed.

Yet more than cannon or the thorny store
Of bayonets, or coats and bread and shoes,
Is Victory's tocsin and its lyric roar—
The bells and bonfires which the courier's news
Sends the wild length of the Atlantic shore
From Maine's chill rocks until the sunlight strews
The seas of Carolina. Men now hope
Freedom, and not mere brave men's death by rope.

* * * * * * *

They are long dead, those holy men who won
Their transient hour in the recurrent fight
For Liberty: each bayonet and gun—
Leprous with rust—is obsolete; a trite
Easily blasphemed name is Washington:
We lie upon their morning like the night . . .
And yet I know that midnight is the time
At which the buried sun begins to climb!

POSTJUDICES

My spirit wearies of the men who lie
Mournful and grand above America—
The vast November clouds that fill our sky
Like phantoms on some ghostly Golgotha.

They hang like ashen cobwebs round the sun
And drape earth's many mansions in their gloom—
The cobwebs by the spirit's spiders spun,
Not scattered yet by any cyclone's broom.

It is their season now: December comes,
And all the white battalions of the snow.
It will be long until the thunder's drums
Sound tocsin for the lightning's gay flambeaux.

And men (like shallow pools) turn frigid too:
Their souls freeze grey with ice, like iron clouds.
It is the Ice Age of earth's pedants who
Think that a dead sun wears his final shrouds.

Meanwhile, the woodchucks and the daffodils
(For earth loves humor) lie in hibernation;
And they will lie serene till April spills
Across the dykes of snow the Spring's elation.

And, sceptic of the Winter's permanence,
I know the nihilists are simpletons;
For like the woodchuck I have confidence
In braver things—in cyclones and in suns.

I know with certainty beyond mistake
The function of all clouds is rain for corn;
I know the rugged grain can even partake
Of snow—sweet milk for kernels newly born.

And I look forward even farther still—
To August clouds like purple Zeppelins
That soar in splendor thru the sky and spill
Wild bombs of lightnings on earth's mandarins.

I trust the earth—and Him beyond the earth,
Who thru all circumstance remains the same:
The clouds are mushrooms for a moment's mirth:
The sun is a perennial flower of flame!

SECOND COLUMBUS

Columbus, mightily you sailed!
You fought the Atlantic—and prevailed.
You sought the Indies, and you found
(Beyond your dream) the thunder-sound
Of surf that meant not India,
But Passage to America.

That day you heard the silver roar
Of surf upon San Salvador,
You could not dream—past your intent—
The splendor of a continent:
From midnight ice of Hudson's Bay
To that wild synthesis of spray
Where Cape Horn lets two oceans meet
In fury at the Andes' feet.
You could not dream America:
The splendor of Niagara,
Silver sheet-lightning—constant, proud—
Roaring in thunder from the cloud
Of five great seas: the prairies where
The cyclones find their thorofare:
The bison, trampling to and fro
Like shaggy floods with feet: the flow
Of foam and rainbows thru the deep

Canyon where sunsets lie asleep:
The Rockies—earth's tremendous surge
Beside its vastest ocean's verge,
Upon whose peaks the wide snows lie
Summer companions of the sky:
The eastern miles of shadowy woods
On Appalachian solitudes,—
Fierce green St. Lawrences of trees
Cascading in wild ecstasies:
The austral golden Amazon
That cleaves a continent, and on
Superb into a riven sea
Like a great arrow mightily
Shot from the Andes' silver bow:
The unhurried but tremendous flow
Of that vast river whose calm strength
And continent-upholding length
Are Whitmanesque—facsimile
And highway of our destiny,
The Mississippi: all of these
Were your unguessed discoveries.

And how much more you could not guess
Beside that Titan wilderness,
O soul with your own vision blind!
You could not know—but you could find—
Our physical America:
Yet that is but the nebula
Whence Thought's great suns and planets yet
Shall gather out of fiery fret.

You could not know—nor could you find—
The America that is the mind!
Beyond the New World's shore and soil
Which you could reach, and which the toil
Of your strong sons has won at last
(Mere continental protoplast)
There is—for you, for us—the goal
That lies within the unborn soul:
The real America that waits
A New Columbus—who creates.

Vision, and power, and tone, and grace
Rooted in spirit, not in space;
A people who can be, since they
Know what they wish to do and say;
A Nation fused in unity
Of mind, and not of boundary;
A continent like a mighty bow
From which Eternity may throw
Arrows of longing toward a goal
Not of the soil but of the soul—
These lie beyond the silver beach
Which your brave *Pinta's* bow could reach:
No canvas sail, no oaken keel,
Battling the waves that roar and reel,
Can bear you onward still to find
America within the mind.
You have not come, Columbus! we,
Your unborn sons, live ignorantly

Within the Old World yet. And you
Must seek America anew!

When shall the soul's Columbus come?
More than the surf's exordium
Silver upon San Salvador
Awaits that voyager!—and more
Than the immense, superb, unguessed
And solid continent! His quest
Is for a New World more profound
Than any that Columbus found:
Niagaran splendors—the calm space
Of prairies—all the depth and grace
Of the Colorado—all the height
Of the Sierras, and the might
Of vaster Mississippis—lie
Superb beneath the mind's new sky.
These wait, and shall—an unknown sum—
Until the New Columbus come.
And he shall come. The destined day
Already is upon its way.

Yes, soon from this Old Spain where we
Live without vision sluggishly,
A lonely voyager shall set sail
And, gazing from the *Pinta's* rail,
See the known shores (a cloudy mass)
Sink down and down, until they pass . . .
Shall set his silver sail, and take
The winds that urge, the waves that shake,

The lightnings and the suns; shall go
Thru the uncharted fearful flow
Of cosmic tides; shall vainly stare
Across his stormy thorofare
For flight of land-birds, or the drift
Of sea-weed, or the silver lift
Of breakers on the shore; shall hear
The muttering of the mutineer
Within his own soul, bidding him
Turn back from the world's fearful rim—
Back to the Old World; yet shall sail
On, on, still steadfast—and prevail.

Thru outer waves and inner fear,
Toward the soul's greater hemisphere,
Onward thru all things he shall go
And hear the great cry ring, "Land Ho!"

III

"I will not cease from mental fight."

WARNING FOR IMPATIENT TREES

O heart be slow and chary of your blooms!
Earth lies between the Winter and the Spring,
Being neither wholly yet. The sun consumes
The thin frost in the morning, and the wing
Of blue-birds like a flying fleur-de-lys
Makes a rich dazzle in the air. And yet
A sudden storm may swoop on bird and tree
Like a snow-feathered Arctic hawk. You fret,
O foolish heart, for Life—and do not know
Too early birth is but too early death.
O cherry tree, spread not your cobweb snow
To be the plaything of the blizzard's breath!
Be wise, my heart: keep all your blooms asleep—
And send your quiet brown roots down deep,
more deep!

ICARUS: 1929

Like an inverted cataract of steel
The sky-scraper shot up: the white-hot wheel
Of suns went over it; the girder-bars
Seemed a black net flung up to catch the stars.
And yet below it in the canyoned street,
Men hurried past its splendor on blind feet,
And grumbled as they turned aside to pass
The scaffolding that walled its perilous mass;
Or drove—unheeding—Ford and Cadillac
Past this steel wedge into the Zodiac.
All the brisk "rat-a-tat" of riveters
Close to the clouds; the clangs, and puffs, and whirs
Of derricks lifting girders; and the shout
Of sky-hung workmen, "Hi you there, look out!"—
Hardly disturbed the busy even click
Made by white fingers on white keys, so quick
And constant in high offices nearby
Dwarfed by this taller giant who took their sky.

Meanwhile, far up where the great girders ran
Like footpaths thru the very clouds, a man
Strode swift, sure-footed, agile, to and fro
As the long girders came, and locked the row

Of rivets trim and firm. Cool, deft, and quiet,
Up fifty dizzy floors above the riot
Of the fierce city—in an airy peace
(Where most men's sick scared shuddering hearts
would cease
To beat at all, from utter reeling fright
At the wide vista and the headlong height)—
He did his humdrum task. "Rat-tat, rat-tat . . ."
He set the last blunt rivet—that was that!
Another girder now: this job meant speed:
Some huge and booming Company had need
Of Bigger and Better Offices; and so
The racing men and engines lifted row
Of steel on row of steel, and out-did Time—
Like overalled genies lifting a sublime
Aladdin's Palace in a night. And he
Moved at his Titan's labor confidently
As if he stood on earth: his pulse seemed steady
As the sure-moving sun: his hands were ready
For the next girder always: and his brain
Seemed like an athlete running without strain.
"Rat-tat, rat-tat!" So as the hours went by
He built Man's power closer to the sky.

Yet as he worked he thought of yesterday:
That sudden blur of darkness, and the sway
Which almost sent him down . . . the sudden grip
Of fingers conscious tho the brain might slip . . .
That daze and blank, wherein (clear-eyed yet blind)
He had clutched the beam and wakened up to find

The steel still under him . . . the asphalt street
Still thirty stories down beneath his feet . . .
And he had heard a comrade shouting: "Hi!
Don't try no monkeyshines up here. Look spry!
What, at your age?" And gradually the sun
Had righted itself; and the far earth that spun
Like a swing underneath, come firm and right.
He had brushed his eyes to clear the sluggish sight;
Grinned palely; and yelled back: "I thought I saw
Someone I knew down there." But a strange awe,
Unknown before, was sickness in his brain;
The girder—once so broad—had seemed a lane
Thru Death.

And so last night when he'd gone down
And set his feet upon the solid town,
He had seen a doctor: he tried not to think
Of what the man had told him: "On the brink
Of" . . . (something with a tangled name—
Something for which his heart was all to blame).
He had had the flu three months before; and now
His heart was strained (the doctor said) somehow—
It must have been he had gone to work again
Too soon. And now he must avoid all strain:
"Some other work . . . A change at least . . ." By God,
These doctors think you simply have to nod
For bread and butter!
"Other work . . . A change . . ."
What could he do—but fumble thru some strange

Drudgery whereat worse men would work fast . . .
And if he *could* find other work at last,
How leave the thrill of working in the sky?
What of the pride of moving there on high,
Laughing at death? Of living in the air,
Walking the girder with an inch to spare?
He loved these rhythms of majestic steel
Spurning the level city with their heel.
He change his work? He who had loved to run
Steel pathways higher than all except the sun?

Why worry at a moment's jolt, a blur
Before the eyes, the jarred heart's faltering stir?
It had not hurt him!—he had caught himself
And kept his sure seat on the girder-shelf.
It had not come before—it would not come
Again . . . or, if it did, no longer numb,
He would be calm as steel and just as steady:
Yes, let it come again—he would be ready!

"Rat-tat, rat-tat, rat-tat!" This job meant speed:
This was a man's work: this was life indeed!
And this was *his* job! Now another beam. . .
And now another . . . then a jet of steam
And a shrill whistle far below him: noon!
He was not tired, and work was done so soon!
Should he go down to eat his lunch? Most days
He did not; but today that shadowy haze
Of yesterday hung over him: the earth
Seemed good to him with its brown solid girth.

A hoist was waiting, and a comrade sat
In it already, waving a greasy hat
In invitation. And the man stood up
Steady and lithe beneath the sky's pale cup
And started out to walk the girder. Well!
It must have been a dream he almost fell
Yesterday afternoon . . . He had never been
Surer of foot than now . . . It made him grin
To think of falling now. He had almost come
To the girder end thru the wind's minor hum
Over the steel.

And there—O swift again
The darkness! and that vacuum in his brain
As well as at his feet! that sick, sick reel!
Which was the sky, and which the girder steel,
And where was earth? His fingers, wiser than
The conscious brain, caught fiercely at the span
Of harsh cold slippery steel—but overset
By the sick body, clutched in vain and let
The man go down. The sudden feel of air
Soft, soft and unsubstantial . . . the despair
Of the scared fierce life-loving blood . . . the rush
Thru quickening space while the deep wind
goes "Hush!"
The roaring chaos as the head whirls round—
Now pointing at the sun, and now the ground . . .
The anguish of the blood within the eyes,
As of ten million stars in bursting skies . . .

The conscious nightmare in the unconscious brain—
The deep heart's knowledge of the impending pain . . .
Then darkness . . . then the sick soft smash on stone
Of that red sponge that had been flesh and bone.

The wind had taken him outward, and he fell
At the street curb. They covered him over well
With dirty canvas (being too sick to see—
Or even try to—who the man might be).
The ambulance came and bore him from the road
Of traffic; and an iron episode
Ended in the iron epic that goes on.

The job meant speed. And so, the noon hour gone,
The whistles blew for other men to run
And build Man's power closer to the sun.

CHICAGO IDYLL

A knife within his hand he stood
  And struck his blow by rote:
All day, for six days in the week,
  He waded blood, and smote
Again . . . again . . . his knife into
  A tied hog's squealing throat.

Bare to the waist, with clot and clog
  Of steaming sweat and blood,
He watched the line of chain-caught hogs
  Flow by in screaming flood;
And slit their red life out, that caked
  His shoes like crimson mud.

Strange flies within an iron web,
  The writhing hogs clicked by—
One after one, in clockwork hell,
  Across a plaster sky—
Their blood-shot, little, bulging eyes
  Aware that they must die.

One hind leg noosed within a loop
  Of chain, head down they hung;

They writhed and squealed, they squealed and writhed,
  As down the room they swung,
Their damp snouts wrinkling at the smell
  Of blood from slit throats flung . . .

Of blood from throats wherein he thrust
  His blade like frozen fire . . .
He slit the soft and heavy flesh
  All day, and did not tire—
A wooden executioner
  Whose arms were twitched by wire.

He thrust the blade into their flesh
  And when he drew it out
The life came with it, choked and thick
  As from a gutter-spout;
Screams spattered into gasps, his hands
  Were red with froth and gout . . .

Thus for ten bloody years he stood
  And slaughtered hogs by rote:
Ten years—ten crimson stolid years—
  He waded blood, and smote
(Each day for six days in the week)
  His blade into a throat.

* * * * * * *

And then one day a something clicked
  Within his heavy brain:

The Life that is not a machine,
From every sullen vein
And artery, rose to wreak abroad
On others its own pain.

The clockwork nightmare flood of hogs
Still clicked its shrieking way;
The river of blood dashed on the stones
Its steaming froth and spray:
The slaughtering went on, but he
Took ghastly holiday.

He stood beside a struggling hog—
His knife was at its neck;
But there the razor-whetted blade
Found strange and sudden check;
And the tied hog went squealing by,
Its throat without a fleck.

He stood, the knife within his hand,
He stood and seemed to brood;
And then he turned—still knife in hand—
From death's mere interlude. . .
And his knife (still hot with blood of hogs)
Found fit vicissitude.

He thrust it with a practised ease
And a swift blow's soft jar
Straight thru a fellow-workman's throat
And slit the jugular

And watched him sob his red life out
In ways familiar.

Then knife in hand he ran amok . . .
Slit, slit . . . before they knew,
Men felt the hot steel in their flesh,
And then the blood was thru . . .
And then they stiffened on the floor—
Heads hideously askew. . .

Before the dazed and cursing men
Could scatter from his rush,
He struck three times and from three throats
He saw the hot life gush . . .
And then an axe beat in his skull
Against the brain's grey plush . . .

Then in that place of blood and doom,
Where death was a cliché,
Men turned aside—and "Jesus Christ!"
Was all that they could say.
And then the hogs moved on once more
Upon their screaming way.

FIERY CROSS

Two simple men who loved the sun
Were sentenced to oblivion
For the thing they had not done—

Two simple men whose martyrdom
Was to be stricken blind and numb
Because they prayed, "Thy Kingdom come!"

Yet did not merely pray, but spoke
Their simple gospel till they woke
Perhaps a score of working folk.

They spoke for human brotherhood;
They would not call war's murder good;
When others crouched in fear—they stood.

They hated force of steel or stealth;
Love was their sun to bring men health;
They saw the world one commonwealth.

Within the world (that wild beasts' den)
They spoke to wolves as if to men,
That Eden might return again.

In fear of truth and innocence
Men silenced them with the immense
Irony of a vile pretence.

Men shut them from the earth and air
And sun that are so free and fair:
Seven years their warder was despair.

Trapped within stone they had to walk—
Death like the shadow of the hawk
Above them . . . while the lawyers talk . . .

Seven years their house was stone and steel
While sick hope in recurrent reel
Whirled them like men strapped to a wheel.

The tribal victims of blood-lust
And all the cobwebs and the dust
Of judges legal and not just,

Tombed for lost years they had to lie
While the white Spring seven times went by—
Poor dead men who could never die.

Yet tho they could not move, but lay
Inert, they knew that every day
They stumbled down a steeper way—

A way from which they could not turn
Till down far vistas they discern
The sullen bulk of chairs that burn.

There in the darkness clear they saw
Engines of anguish and of awe—
The fiery guillotines of law.

They felt the iron cap whose chill
Is but a dam of ice to spill
The floods of fire that roar and kill—

The cap that pours into the brain
The livid needles of its pain
Till the blood boils within the vein.

They felt the fumbling trusties lock
The straps about them, while the clock
Beat the sick moments till the shock . . .

The moments that must have an end
When some white, unseen hand should send
The tides of fire to roar and rend—

Oceans of fire to stab and strain
Thru ruptured channels of each vein
Till the skull bubbles with the brain.

(Father forgive us! for we too—
We also—know not what we do!)

ON THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF SACCO AND VANZETTI

I love the forests of the lightning, where
White-hot and terrible trees with purple boughs
Shake down the rain, like wild leaves, thru the air
And then fall crashing on the mountains' brows.
The storm without me is the storm within:
The lightnings make white forests in my soul:
Within my spirit roars earth's stress and din:
Within my mind the mightier thunders roll.
Fall, fall, great livid sky-upholding trees!
Fall, fall, and shatter all our human world!
Fall like doom's conscious Caryatides
And let high heaven to deep hell be hurled!
Crush Man, the angel with the maggot's brain:
Crush Man, the idiot ape, the spawn of Cain!

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN US?

Continent of Calvary—
Cross of earth set in the sea
Of Antarctic Golgotha—
Terrible America!

I'm no Christ; and yet I too
Hang, America, on you
For a mighty cross of earth
With a continental girth.

And not only I—there are
Many on this sluggish star
Crucified . . . who toss and cry
At the blue skull of the sky.

There are many—Christ and thief—
Asking death for heart's relief:
Grinning mob and grinding spear,
Jesting Pilate . . . all are here . . .

Pity us who toss, and pray
Curtain for our Passion Play.
"It is finished!" let us cry
Futile, to the futile sky.

He who (unlike us) was great,
He could carry this world's weight.
Oh for all Eternity
He enacted Calvary!

Why, O Father, must we too
Cry—and cry in vain—to you?
End, we pray, the Golgotha
That men name America!

A BALLAD OF EVIL

Then my heart wakened and I saw earth's glooms
Like hideous mushrooms
That swelled as big as trees and shut the sun
From lambs that run
And from nasturtiums made of pungent flame—
Pied suns that came
Mystically from the black and humorous earth.
The spotted girth
Of mushrooms, like vast gnomes, grew up and made
My heart afraid.

A leprous witchcraft turned the world I saw
To a bleak awe.
Forests of ashen ogres, the mushrooms
Roofed me in glooms.
Vagrance of air, glamour of suns, the white
Moon-moth of night . . .
All these were hidden by that stealthy roof—
Alas, star-proof!
That witch's forest and its sick sweet shade
Turned me afraid.

The emerald fountains of the wholesome trees,
The chickadees,

The arbutus whose coral atols grow
Beneath the snow,
The snow itself that on the mountains' breasts
A moment rests
Then flows in wholesome floods from its far nooks—
Sweet milk for brooks. . .
All vanished and within that evil glade
Left me afraid.

And I was sure earth's stars had been a dream—
Bright motes that seem
To flare a moment in a blind-man's eye,
And then go by.
I was so lost within that wood of glooms
Its sick sweet dooms
Seemed certain as the ground . . . seemed everywhere
Even as the air.
How leave that labyrinth and palisade
Of monstrous shade?

I sank where mushroom roots had made a knoll;
The spongy bole
Of one of those vast gnomes was over me—
A bat-like tree.
In that sick mood when even despair is grown
The dying drone
Of a tense string struck once and only once,
I lost the suns
That used to shine. My shadowed spirit made
The world all shade.

Just then I saw beside me a forlorn
Sad spray of corn.
I was so sorry when I saw it there
My own despair
Lessened. I stooped, and with swift fingers pried
The earth aside,
Softened the mould, and sought to give it space
And food for grace.
Not of myself I thought: I was afraid
For that green blade.

I would have perished in sick apathy,
Yet could not see
The golden corn die smothered in the glooms
Of grey mushrooms.
And when with all my softening of the dirt
It dropped inert,
Splendor of rage filled all my heart, as flame
Fills even the tame
Cold pallid summer clouds with the sky-whit'ning
And terrible lightning.

I leaped upon my feet, I shouted, and
With my bare hand
I beat—a rebel—at those vast mushrooms,
Earth's vaulted dooms.
Not for myself, but for a blade of corn,
In a wild scorn

I battered down with power beyond my power
One evil tower . . .
And (tho the battle still is to be won)
I saw the sun!

COSMIC DAY

Still over us the huge and careless day
Moves on—august, serene, and terrible:
Upon Chicago, or the deer that stray
By Berkshire brooks, falls the calm miracle.
Still huge and careless while in the green wood
The fawn-brown secret rabbits with bright eyes
People the silence we call solitude—
Their brains not wakened and their blood still
wise . . .
Still huge and careless, while the nations reel
In the massed epilepsy that is war;
Or Man (who broke his brother on the wheel)
Is broken now beneath the wheels that roar . . .
Still, still proceeds upon its steadfast way—
Thru death, thru life—the Huge and Careless Day.

OUT OF LIMBO

The indeterminate age that is like earth's March
  is here,
When Spring and Winter hang at the equipoise
  of the year
And the season is half-and-half, and nothing is
  strong and clear.

Now Winter has not strength for the sterile beauty
  of snow;
And Spring has not yet strength to make the
  crocus grow;
And earth lies barren between the two, and the
  bleak winds blow.

The iron frost is gone that tempered the flaccid earth,
But the strong and humble grass yet waits its
  April birth
To knit the muddy mould to a firm and living girth.

The strong clear frosty skies where the suns were a
  dazzle of gold
(Bracing and brilliant and gay, for all they were
  brief and cold)

Are grey with the neutral clouds above the
neutral mould.

The roads that the blizzard stopped, but at least
made epic and great,
Are rivers of sullen mud—grotesque and inchoate,
Like caricatures of chaos from worlds primordiate.

And tho the robins come in wide uneasy flocks
They seem (in this mournful world) a mocking
paradox:
As if upon Arctic ice came a burst of hollyhocks.

The pines that were Gothic spires superb in the
silver blaze
Of a broad snow-brilliant earth, stand dull in the
dullard days,
Like painted fronds of lead above the woodland ways.

The barren earth that longs for the dancing leaves
to bloom,
And the iris and trilliums, green-woven on
April's loom,
Labors in impotent anguish beneath a potent gloom.

For as yet earth has not strength: death has not
strength to go,
Nor has life strength to come . . . and in their
pause I grow

Restless and impotent too . . . and I wander to and fro
In a Laodicean earth that is saddest of all I know.

And I long for the terrible suns that are so fierce
and good,
That stoop from their height of heaven to the
little ferns in the wood,
And bid the green corn grow in its lush fair
lustihood.

O whimsical April, and June that brings the
sun again!
O heat of bronze July and the lightning's golden
stain!
When shall you bring, once more, earth's positive
joy and pain?

O earth, you long like me for the leaves and the
dancing flowers:
Come gather your patient strength thru the
uneventful hours,
And out of impotence let us fashion the splendors
and powers!

At least between life and death, in the Limbo of
our Day,
In the indeterminate Age, I scorn Man's neutral
grey,
And I patiently wait the Sun, and the Great Dawn's
golden spray!

AND YET—

I know too well the evil of the world—
The cruelties of earth, and all the shames.
But as I wander in the hills today
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

I do not know the reason of the Dark,
Nor why Time ever clips life's wings and tames
The wild bird, Eden. But beneath the hills
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

Why Winter takes Fall's banners, and why Death
Must be the shadowing ebony that frames
The picture, Life, I do not know. And yet
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

I cannot tell the great or trivial stakes
Earth wins with us, the torn cards of her games:
How could I know? I walk the valleys where
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

Dreary-go-rounds of petty lives, or white
Cross made of lightnings whereon hang Earth's
fames . . .

These I cannot explain. I wander where
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

I am not Life's press-agent, glib to solve
The night of things: why Earth forever lames
The feet of Heaven, I do not know. I know
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

The easy dogmatists of faith and doubt
Know all; and this one praises, this one blames.
And I say nothing—but I walk the hills.
The Autumn lakes are mirrors full of flames.

IV

"Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,"

FOOT-NOTE OF SADNESS

Tho I love Life—tho I say *Yes* to earth—
And tho I carve the gargoyles of the mind,
Delighting in rich humor and good mirth—
Nevertheless I know the dark behind
Our human sunlight. Earth's iron agonies,
The huge and haunting sadness of the soul,
Are like gaunt Winter past the flaming trees
Of swift October . . . or the distant roll
Of surf, to one who walks amid the flowers
In a quaint garden hidden from the sea,
Loitering thru Summer's quiet and brilliant hours
To the stern music of Eternity.
Always within my heart I hear the roar
Unending, of the surf upon the shore.

DARK HALO

Death is the shadow of the hawk
Above us always as we walk;
And we are rabbits in a meadow
That play beneath the great wings' shadow.

We nibble, nibble, and forget
That seal of darkness on us set.
Or one of us, it may be, dozes;
Or two touch little twitching noses.

Meanwhile above us evermore
The terrible wings of darkness soar;
And the plumed panther of the air
Forever sees us blank and bare.

The yellow, cold, unwinking eyes
Are always on us from the skies;
The talons are alert to stir
Implacable in blood-dabbled fur.

Yet he alone is man who dares
Look up and see the death that stares:
The challenge of the shadow flings
Strength on us, like archangels' wings.

It is our utmost majesty
And triumph, to look up and see:
To see, above our transient course—
To see and scorn—the doom of force!

AUTUMN THRENODY FOR NEGROES BURIED IN RHODE ISLAND

Here in New England earth men buried them:
Yet still (I think) the old homesickness runs
Thru hearts beneath the granite's requiem
That longed for Africa and bronze-red suns.
Death's expurgation censors from their blood
(It may be, now) the glamour and the glow
Of days like great waves in a crimson flood—
The heart grows numb beneath New England snow.
Yet the immortal longing's mortal hurt
Perhaps disquiets them still where quiet they lie:
I only know their bodies lie inert,
Exiled from scarlet sun and copper sky.
Poor convicts in our grey Siberia,
I pity you—I, too, seek Africa!

* * * * * *

We both seek Africa. And Lo, today
Life also longs for color and bronze-red sun!
Out of the granite where I thought you lay
Quiet in Rhode Island's quiet oblivion,
Like crashing drums of fire . . . like flames, and flags,
And Gothic spires of blood . . . the maple-trees

Are oriflammes upon the granite crags,
Filling the sober land with ecstasies.
And here above the tomb where you were laid,
Arboreal fierce Archangels with vast wings
Of burning crimson stand. And I, afraid,
Like Mary in the garden, ponder things
Impossible . . . and reaching thru the gloom
I touch the Evangel—and the Empty Tomb.

SURSUM CORDA

(For Walter Hendricks)

Perhaps they do grow old and die—
Swallow, and bee, and butterfly.

Yet when next summer comes, lo there
The same wild acrobats of air!
The swallows playing daft and free,
Like monkeys in an azure tree. . .
The bees, that toward pink honey-bins
Zoom like June's gargoyle Zeppelins. . .
And ageless antic butterflies—
Winged daffodils from Paradise.

Nature is always the same age:
Decay is her mere cozenage.
Tho time may sieze on you and me,
Life stands within Eternity.

For Youth is an exhaustless draught:
And tho Death set his lips and quaffed
Forever, he could do no more
Than make a fresher current pour.

The earth's insouciant sanity
Should be a joy to you and me.
Death, the dark pendulum, may rock:
He cannot change the enchanted clock
That will not strike, for all his power,
Another than the morning hour!

MORITURUS?

(To Edna St. Vincent Millay)

Yes comrade, you and I are under death-sentence
of birth.
And the sun itself (or so the Wise Men say)
Is an incandescent Mazda whose filaments will
burn out by and by
Leaving us to grope our way to bed
In the dark room of the world.

But the sun will last our century.
Therefore our greatest worry is ourselves—
For we shall not, now, last a century.
And you, comrade, tell me that you don't want to die:
You say that when Death comes, a burglar,
To rifle the bright gold of your spirit
You will bolt the door.
(You mentioned pushing a bureau and a chair
against it).
And you say that when he breaks in
(For death is a strong-arm man, a gun-man worse
than any in Chicago—
He has a notch on his gun for Daniel Boone
and Napoleon

And even Hercules!)
You will throw your arms around the convenient
marble hydrant of the Boreal Pole
And stir the austral Pampas grasses with your
much shrieking.
(Poor little comrade, I know, I know!
Have I not heard the rabbit in the stone-wall—
The little brown rabbit with the weasel at his throat?
He says the same things—
Only he has not your articulate genius!)

But comrade, how do you *know* that death is
an end and not an episode?
I remember one much greater than I (or even
than you)
Who spoke of "This vegetated body;"
And another (also greater than we) who said:
"To die is different from what men expect—
and luckier."
Little comrade, perhaps you are too dogmatic:
Perhaps you need a little of the Higher Scepticism:
Perhaps you should not be a Fundamentalist
About the simple Creed of Death Everlasting.
You have a faith so naive—so trusting—so simple—
That it must express (I am sure it does express)
A fundamental need of your heart.
You want to believe that Death is the end:
For something shining has died in you,
And it hurts—you want to forget it:
You are a child with spiritual heart-ache

And you want to go to sleep;
And yet, you want to clutch your broken toys
and stay awake:
Poor little comrade!

I would not want you other than a child
Writing the diary of Ariel
In the Castle of Giant Despair:
A lovely child
Chasing immortal (and unattainable) fireflies.
And yet for myself—and for my America—
I want something different:
You and I and our so many million unknown
comrades
Shall not thus find light (or even respite of twilight)
Chasing caricatures of suns.
When will Prometheus come (a Titan Don Quixote)?
When will Hercules in his seventy-times-seven labors
Seek the golden suns of the cosmic Hesperides?

You want Life-at-any-price:
A paralytic (a log with consciousness),
Burdened with being a burden,
Unable to use your body yet bound to your body,
An eagle in a wheel-chair,
Ariel in a cage of fog,
Anything—anything—
Except Death!

But I have the tragic sense of life, the tragic sense
of death:
If life be only ennui and sordid ache . . .
If death be an absolute and an end . . .
Let us take our coward flesh in our two hands and say:
"Come, comrade, play the man!
Do not hold the Ice Age to your head
Like a silver pistol that misses fire for a Millenium
or two:
There is, in the bureau drawer,
A surer pistol!"
Let us not say: "Live—for the Night cometh
When flesh can ache no more!"
Let us die.

But there is something in my blood that says:
"Why so solemn?
If the sun goes out, be confident:
I will find you a New Chaos
And sit on it a few hundred million centuries
(What are a few hundred million centuries to you?)
And hatch you a new sun!"
The red Niagara that roars in my arteries
Says to Death, the eventual rocks,
"So? You expect to keep me from the seas?
Pshaw, good friend!"
The Golden Bird
That perches three-score-years-and-ten (or five
minutes)

Upon the rib-boughed and hair-leaved tree of
my body
Feels a beautiful inward mirth when people ask it:
"What will you do when the tree falls?"

And when the Spectacled Wise Men
Ask me, "What are you in the presence of Sirius
And all the million suns of the Milky Way?"
I reply: "My dear solemn Doctors,
So far as I know the Milky Way knows nothing
of me—but I know it.
Does not the greater always include the less?
If consciousness could be any possibility go out
It would be most unfortunate for—the Milky Way:
Indeed, without Consciousness, the constellations
Are in no way distinguishable from egg-nog—
Or last year's snow-flakes—
Or the ghost of Abraham's anemones."

And when the Burglar comes,
When the Gun-man jimmies open the flesh,
And hunts me thru the corridors of my arteries,
And finds me in the hall of my heart,
Then—I wonder?
Will not Death rather be a strong deliverer and a
comrade—
Christ in the form of a Sans Culotte,
Breaking down terribly the terrible Bastille
Where, body-dungeoned,
The fallen spirit had lain long, so long

That it had forgotten there is a Wild West Wind
  blowing the clouds of cosmic being,
Or a vast and careless sun.
And then (it may be)
While the violent hands of the gentle saviours
Crash and fumble at the doors—
Ere the pitying rescuers reach the pitiful prisoner—
The long-buried man may shake in fear, and gibber,
And clutch at the sad toys that have so long been
  all in all to him—
A rag of a book, a picture, a crust, a cup . . .
And try to hold his door, or catch and clutch at his
  iron bed, shrieking
For his nook in the Bastille—
Refusing the sun!

ICE AGE

Then came the Age of Ice—earth's vast White Terror,
Out of the evil Empire of the North:
It sent the terrible winds with icy bludgeons
And all the Cossacks of the glaciers forth.

Stupid and stolid with a dull precision
Its armies in their silver uniform
Came marching, marching south like ambulant
boulders
With the white Goose Step of a fossil storm.

It set its iron heel upon the roses,
And Winter's law-and-order on the corn;
It silenced with a censorship of silver
The tocsin of Niagara's bugle-horn.

Yet now, where once it set its quaint taboo,
Red Chanticleer chants *cockadoodledoo!*

V

"Till we have built Jerusalem"

PASSING THE DEAR LOVE OF COMRADES

(For Alsa)

The corn beneath the earth has found no friend:
The earthworms there make their faint clammy
sound—
The pallid people of the Middle Ground;
And there are sullen stones no root can rend.
How from that darkness can the corn ascend
Like a green fountain whose free waters bound
Into earth's garden where the blue profound
Of air is Eden not of source but end?
Because the sun from the blue dome wherein
He stands serene, stoops to the buried blade—
Steps tenderly from out the height of heaven
To be the humble corn's great origin.
And I, the corn who rise in green cascade,
Know you the sun by whom my earth was riven!

PARADOX

To me who wandered in the night
Your love was like a hearth-fire's light:
You gave me in my loneliness
A home from all the dark and stress.

But I who wander evermore—
Columbus of a vaster shore—
How could I keep, if that were all,
Love's comfortable prison-wall?

For mere fire's comfort? Not for that
I chant our love's Magnificat!
In night where clouds like grey wolves run
You lit no hearth-fire—but the sun.

The homely light that bakes my bread
Is the wild halo of night's head;
And Nature's passion makes your kiss
The lightning's flame-etched emphasis.

You are (like earth) a paradox
Of the sun's calm and the storm's shocks;
You are to me at once a roof
Near, and a sky that soars aloof.

An earth to dwell on, and a goal
Beyond Orion's lapse and roll—
Such are you! How can shaped air tell
Dimensions of a miracle?

You bring me in earth's Dreadful Night
Both the lightning and the light!

HEART'S APRIL

Now to the dark loam of my heart
You come like April's urging;
And in great trumpet-notes of flame
The tulip-buds are surging.

My April, come across the hills—
The sun your Easter bonnet—
Your gown a silver lawn of mist
With bluebirds patterned on it!

A shepherdess of elfin sheep,
You drive them to the mountains
Of willow-trees; and in my heart
You wake the crocus-fountains.

As quiet as the crimson dawn,
Your gentle violences
Shatter with flame and soundless shock
The Winter of my senses.

How could I tell you what you mean
To me, if you should ask it?
Life is a blaze of dancing flowers
Within the earth's green basket!

GOTHIC LOVE

Men say that one and one make two—
But we know two make one.
Dear comrade of my heart! we find
The heaven men seek—and leave behind.
And tho men say that love is blind,
We know love is the sun.

Oh, picking loves like blueberries
The world's poor children go—
They never taste the fruit they leave
(Illusioned, innocent, naive!)
Because of fruit which—they believe—
Outshines the fruit they know.

We see them ever run to seek
For some new rainbow's end.
But we who go too far to roam—
Who go so far we stay at home—
Possess (and not pursue) the dome
Where rain and sunlight blend.

Not like that wingéd thorn, the bee,
From rose to rose we fly:

The earth clings ever to the sun
And lets the barren comets run
From dark to dark, from sun to sun,
And win and waste the sky.

Oh unitary and unique
We know, are all great things:
No mother asks her child should be
Changed every week for novelty!
No bird would lose the ecstasy
And ennui of its wings.

Love is no flower to sow and pluck,
To smell and toss away:
Love is the slow, sky-filling oak
That thru the sod and centuries broke
Toward cyclones and the lightning-stroke
And the sun-haloed day.

The Little Children of the World
Grow weary of the slow
And steadfast ardor of the earth—
Centuries and suns that rear the girth
Of forests into roaring mirth
Superb above the snow.

But we know love, like all things great,
A strength the years impart.

Love is a house of holy bliss
Not built by hand—nor yet by kiss.
Faith fashions thru the centuries
The Gothic of the heart!

PROMETHEAN HOUR

Love is a Passion Play—
Not play and passion:
Love's season is not May
And Youth's bright fashion.

No one knows love save he
Who shares with her
Death's threat and agony—
Life's harbinger.

Love's mightiest hour brings
No moons sky-whit'ning,
But archangels whose wings
Are crimson lightning.

Pleasure's a little lamb
In a green meadow:
Joy dares with its *I am*
The thunder's shadow.

(We have heard, you and I,
Past night's slow year,
An angry little cry—
Uncouth and dear!)

A CHILD IS BORN

(For Georgiana)

A Lilliputian angel, she
Sleeps often, very quietly:
Our love has flowered in her faith—
Quietly she draws her breath:
She trusts life and lets life make
The rosy strength to which she'll wake.

A bud of the Burning Bush of God,
She finds the world both good—and odd:
Dainty smiles go out and in,
Making dimples of her chin.
Those conscious violets, her eyes,
Are subtle, innocent, and wise;
But they are not yet probatory—
Still blinded with the clouds of glory.
Her voice . . . Ah, I remember, I,
The first time that I heard her cry.
For hours I had stood alone
Wishing I were not flesh but stone,
Waiting—near pain I could not share—
The confirmation of despair;

When sudden, mid the stir and moan,
I heard a sound I'd never known—
A little, sudden, angry squeak
(As when a squeezed doll tries to speak) . . .
Perhaps she'll sing in years to be—
That squeak was music's height to me!
And now, with coo and grunt and cry,
She tries to tell me what and why.
And her small star-fish hands can hold
All my heart in their soft fold.

Oh all the pride I ever had,
All the great things that made me glad,
Shrivel before this tiny bud
Whose mystic roots are in my blood.
One Wise Man (like those ancient Three),
I kneel to God revealed to me:
I lay before her innocence
Love's myrrh, and gold, and frankincense.
I leave the Inn where was no room,
And in the humble Manger's gloom
I worship, holy and apart,
This star that stands above my heart!

ETERNAL OCCURRENCE

The world is always as old as death and as young
as birth:
Adam forever lies in a cradle's Eden asleep;
On any farm we can see the cosmic dawn and hear
The song of the Morning Stars when the daffodil
chick says "Peep!"

The blade of corn, like a new-born emerald butterfly
From a golden chrysalis, grows as filmy and young
today
As ever the baby corn in the fields of Boaz and Ruth—
For the green third day of creation returns with
the cycle of May.

The new-fledged robin that feels the lift and lapse
of the air
Is as young as the robin that flew in the orchard
of Ramases;
The baby that kicks off her small knitted sock from
her small dimpled foot,
Is younger that Eve new-wakened amid the
primal trees.

Creation's week forever occurs: from the great *I am*
Streams the immortal Eden of earth, the splendor
and pang:
To see the world begin again in a baby's heart
Is to catch a glimpse of what Adam lost, ere the
great gates clang.

VI

"In England's green and pleasant land."

RESPITE

I will go back again to lonely woods
For I am hunted by the hounds of grief:
Perhaps some brook in the far solitudes
Will be my crystal Lethe of relief.
Life slips its hounds upon me: I must run
Like last year's fawn that hears the terrible bruit
Of its first hunt—to me the very sun
Seems but one tawny hound in that pursuit.
I must go back again to lonely places;
I must seek refuge in earth's farthest nook.
There I will hide me from men's cruel faces;
There I will cross the respite of a brook.
Beyond that homely Lethe I will wade
And lie—a spent fawn—panting, safe, afraid.

THE CHIPMUNK

A chipmunk sits on a low stone-wall;
Above his back his tail is tall—
Like a furry tree and a silken roof
(Jaunty but scarcely weatherproof!)
For the fashions come and the fashions go—
But the chipmunk carries his tail just so.

He wears a suit of golden buff—
But he has no collar, he has no cuff;
Alone with the sun and the wind all day,
He wears a rakish negligee.
But his little brown ears and his big brown eyes
Are pert and alert against all surprise.
His whiskers feel the things they pass
Like a sensitive thicket of silver grass;
And his stripes with their tropic colors are
Gay as an innocent jaguar.
For the fashions come and the fashions go—
But the chipmunk wears his stripes just so.

The chipmunk sits on his silken haunches
Under the dapple of windy branches;
And his hands, with a deft and lightning grace,
Hold his dinner or wash his face:

He turns in his fingers daintily
A barrel whose cooper's a hazel-tree.

His house is under a dead pine-stump
Which sweet-fern shades with its fragrant clump;
And his door is hid with the dainty twine
(From the blue-jay's gossip) of partridge-vine.
And he has for his mate a chipmunk girl
Whose stripes are gay and whose tail's a-curl;
And each Spring beneath the pine-tree's heel
Five blind babies squirm and squeal:
Fragrant and warm and soft each lies,
And as dainty-small as the fairies' mice.
For the fashions come and the fashions go—
But chipmunks enter the world just so.

Oh the weasel, Death, will come someday—
Thru wall and thicket he tracks his prey.
Quick fear will leap in the chipmunk's eyes,
Sudden and bright like cold fireflies . . .
A cry . . . and the weasel will drink his blood
And find the taste of his small life good.
For the fashions come and the fashions go—
But Death will come to us all just so.

Yet life has nothing to do with death:
The chipmunk chirps with a lusty breath.
He forages in the woods and prays
For the daily nuts—in paraphrase.

As nonchalant as the earth itself,
Half gentle tiger, half tawny elf,
A fraction of life whose life is whole—
Serene he sits while the red suns roll.

Oh chipmunks come and chipmunks go—
But always the Chipmunk lives just so!

THE COW

That four-legged fountain called a cow
Is stranger than the Sphinx:
What Oedipus has told us how
Green grass within a copper cow
Turns the white milk he drinks?

The Roc from the Arabian Tale
Was not so strange as she;
Jonah's apartment in the whale
Beside her alchemy's a pale
And gentle verity.

God's jolly cafateria
With four legs and a tail,
As mystic as the Cabala,
An elf in rufous taffeta,
She pours us ivory ale.

The Tavern of the Crumpled Horn,
She pours a cosmic flood
That antedates John Barleycorn;
'Twill feed the Superman unborn:
It nourished Adam's blood.

She eats the grass and honey-dew,
The buttercups and daisies;
And she will dream, and chew, and chew . . .
Invite her soul, and loaf, and moo
Life's rude and wholesome praises.

Her udder is a Holy Grail
Whence heroes, saints, and lovers—
Yes, all the sons of man—grow hale.
Oh she's an ambulant Fairytale
That's bound in leathern covers!

A quiet New England bossy, she
Is also something more:
The good earth's generosity,
And health, and humorous mystery,
In ruddy metaphor!

GOTHIC FARMER

(For Orrin Whiting)

Slowly across the lilac dusk
  He drives the plodding team;
The horses move their slow great limbs
  Like giants in a dream;
And the fragrant star in his pleasant pipe
  Is a steady-twinkling gleam.

The horses' huge deliberate limbs
  In the purple dusk are black:
They move as calmly as if they went
  To Eternity and back,
Tho he strikes across their shaggy jet
  The flat reins with a *thwack.*

The mighty wagon jolts and bangs
  On frozen rut and stone;
But he sits upon his blanket seat
  As on a cosmic throne;
And heaven lies with its rich content
  Within his belt's vast zone.

Tho Nature is a Yankee now
And cuts the blue days short,
The fallen leaves and frosty air
Provoke no sad retort:
He thinks of the cider, and the nuts,
And the birds that bring him sport.

Unhurried, powerful, serene,
Down the steep fawn-brown road,
He drives the team from the woods where they
All day drew load on load:
They think of the warm barn and the hay
After toil's episode.

He thinks of the cider's tang, that sends
Its fireflies thru the blood;
And the farm-house table like an earth
Heaped with a Titan's food;
And there wakens in his mighty heart
The Brobdignagian mood.

November, like an Age of Iron,
Has stripped October's trees—
Now all the woods of Gothic flame
Are ashes in the breeze;
But the twilight trees are lavender
Like a mist of Arcady's.

And thru the lilac mist he goes
  Like a Titan carved in granite
(Tho his heart is warm and rich and wide
  Like the shirt it takes to span it):
His life is a jovial golden sun,
  And the earth is but his planet!

SCRUB OAK

I am like a scrub oak tree:
Granite is good earth for me.
I am small—but very tough:
Rock, for me, is food enough.
Elms may lift their pebbled towers
Higher, and the October flowers
Of the maples flush and blaze
Brighter than my sober phase;
But I hold my steadfast bronze
Leaves when they are skeletons.

Also in the summer I,
All that earth can do, defy:
Barren ledge and burning earth
Are foundation of my mirth.
There my silver-shaggy boughs
Feed the wildwood deer, not cows;
And that pert and furry flame—
The red-squirrel—in mad game
Runs across my leafy hills
For his emerald domeciles.
Oven-bird and loud towhee
Have a strong green shield in me,

Bravely held against the sun.
Under my low bosses run
Fragrant gloss and dainty twine
Of wintergreen and partridge-vine.
And (while I turn the sun's shock)
Spring's lusty burnished partridge-cock
Beats his wings until they drum
Love's superb exordium.

Rock below and sun above—
Such is the harsh life I love;
Sun above and rock below—
Still I bud, and leaf, and grow:
Like little Jack in the old tale
I fight my giants—and prevail.

In serenity I fashion
With quiet power and quiet passion
Stalwart, loving-intricate
Cups to hold the glossy freight
Of the future's forests shut
In the brown joke of a nut.

Ice storms come, and ice storms go;
Fire's crimson rivers flow
Flooding with their tidal waves
My green homely architraves:
Quietly I rise again
Over violence or chicane—

Defying from the deeper granite
The skin-diseases of the planet.

Listen to a scrub oak tree
Speaking his philosophy:
"Rock and sun and sand are good
Always to a brave man's mood:
Build on waste and desolation
Your green towers of affirmation;
If no God or man be fed,
Offer deer their emerald bread;
Tho you shield no man or maid,
Give the little rabbits shade!"

HARVEST HOME

The clouds have fruit of lightning, and the earth
Offers itself in joyous Harvest Home
Of golden flesh and crimson blood. The heart
Of man grows also like a ruddy fruit.

Sap of the universe thru all that is
Runs with the ardor of a subtler Spring:
Earth's joy it is to grow in golden corn
For bread; or into cool and silken suns—
Roses for beauty; or to cloud-grown fruit
Of orange lightnings. . . to some fruit of life.

Let the Ice Age—a silver pruning-knife—
Cut leaves and branches; or let nebulae
Of chilling rains make white monotony
Upon its leaves, and feed its stalwart roots:
Or let fierce suns like heaven's golden bulls
Consume its leaves: Earth, like a gardener, prunes
By tragedy the deathless tree of life.

Only one sorrow breaks the heart of man:
To see his words grow up like yellow corn
From the brain's patient earth, or see his heart
Ruddy with love hang on the body's tree,

Or see his deeds like crimson roses grow—
And yet to see them, all unnoticed, fade—
To see them no one's beauty, no one's bread.

All humble lives, like flowers in the woods,
Or common dandelions upon a lawn,
Would paraphrase the burning urge of earth
To their own tongue of beauty. And their joy
Is but to utter—and be understood.
I know their passion, and my heart is great
With all their sorrow: it is my sorrow too.

Therefore I love the all-scorned dandelion,
The lonely violets, and the ragged corn
That grows in little fields: I give my heart
(Not my mere eyes) to their quiet loveliness.

Also I seek, both for myself and them,
Some One beyond the fickleness of man—
Some One to whom our lives are Harvest Home—
Love for His wine, and beauty for His bread.
My life is useless save at last it find
The Sickle, and the Harvest Home, and Him
Whose life I, joyous, nourish with my death.
Therefore, like corn, I stretch my emerald hands
Upward toward Him whose grain I long to be.

"Oh that I but knew where I might find Him!" such
Is the world's deepest word. And I, even I,
Know it the utmost ardor of my heart.

And when I grow to be the Wheat or Grape
Within His garden, then the sap of life
Flows thru my wood with mightiest ecstasy—
Truth's ancient proof, the more abundant life.

O heart, my heart, you are like a ruddy fruit—
Like golden corn—the Harvest Home of God!

COSMIC LORD

He plays with the stars for his shining pebbles
Like a lonely child on the ocean's verge;
Yet he is the lord of all good rebels,
Who leads the suns in a golden surge.

He leads the fierce suns—gay, insurgent—
Against the Ancient Regime of Night;
And yet tho the march of his stars be urgent,
A leaf of grass makes his bowed heart light.

He sustains the worlds that charge on chaos,
And even the pitiful moons that die;
He knows the agonies that dismay us,
And answers—with strength—the chipmunk's cry.

Tho the Ice Age come, like White Guards bringing
Their reign of terror over an earth,
He rises against the glaciers—flinging
Life's red flag forth with a roaring mirth.

And then he will lie and loaf an hour,
Watching a spear of summer grass—
While dwarf blimps zoom to a purple tower
And the grasshoppers' green lightnings pass.

He binds between birth and death for covers
The terrible poem called Calvary;
And yet he gives to his tragic lovers
Laughter to keep their spirits free.

* * * * * *

Such is he. And we who serve him—
His proudly humble chivalry—
Know that no death nor night shall swerve him
From the triumph of endless tragedy.

HEART OF LIGHT

(For Rudolph Gilbert)

I know a lake where lilies grow
And sway at anchor to and fro,
Like ivory galleons in whose hold
Lies freight of pollen-dusty gold.
Only that buccaneer, the bee,
Boards them on that quiet sea:
Beside his drowsy violence
Nothing breaks their innocence.
They catch the vivid sun to be
Gold wine in cups of ivory;
They translate the heart of earth
Into beauty's burning mirth.

I will go and float like them
Where silence is an apothegm:
Sway and float, float and sway,
Thru the sun-soaked August day.
Blue herons on wide solemn pinions
Will visit my serene dominions;
And quiet deer like copper shadows
Wade into my azure meadows.

There within a careless boat
At the wind's whim let me float,
Knowing I can never stray
Far outside the Milky Way.
The same sun that warms Mercury,
An humble giant, stoops to me.
Sun-soaked like a door-stone cat,
I lie, and wake, and hear the chat—
The mystic chat—of the wind-hilly
Water with the buoyant lily.
I lie and listen for the tune
From the other Margin of the Moon—
From the Unseen Sea whose rhythmic flood
Lies in (and far beyond) my blood.
The world is but a metaphor:
I push it open like a door.

The idleness which men call work—
The business whereby they shirk—
Their schemes to build that Heaven which lies
Already in their hearts' red skies—
Their hungry senses like a pack
Of hounds that bay on pleasure's track—
From all of these I turn away
To the golden Doors of Day.

The world which is not what it seems
(Not less than doubts, but more than dreams),
Which is no Sphinx or Cryptogram,
But stranger—like a sun, or lamb;

The world which had its genesis
Not in reason but in bliss;
Which seems a labarynthine mesh
To those who walk the ways of flesh,
But many mansions to inherit
To those who walk the way of spirit;
The world whose truth the use-bound mind
Forever seeks—and cannot find,
But which the soul's great synthesis
Knows as a lover knows a kiss . . .
Or as a poet knows the words
That cross a page like crimson birds . . .
This world I find—like fire in wood—
And (as God Eden) find it good.

Joyously, oh joyously
I idle on Eternity—
I idle, knowing I possess
The Life that passeth happiness:
The Earth is but a night of clay
'Twixt Eden's day and Eden's day.
There is no whither and no whence
For the spirit's permanence:
Hidden in Time's anagram
Remains Eternity's: I AM.

Thru doors of water and of mud
Rises beauty's burning flood;
Out of Life's exuberance
These lilies flame—like suns that dance.

The poet beyond the veil called earth
Exults in miracle and mirth;
But cant and custom can eclipse
Truth's terrible Apocalypse.

Today, for me, the veil is riven:
I know that Life's the film of heaven.
Earth is a dark and kindly glass
Which only shadowed splendors pass,
Lest eyes not ready for the white
Glory, should go blind with light!

AUTUMN CHANT

The clock of the seasons turns—it it Autumn's
mighty hour:
The earth is a burnished glory: the valleys like
gardens glow;
And up on the hills each crimson maple or golden
birch
Tosses and flames in the hands of the breeze for the
earth's flambeau.

The pumpkins lie like humorous suns amid the corn—
Broad halos of living gold from the heart of the
dusky earth;
And the color-flaming woods are flags that are
five miles long,
Flung up against the sky for the oriflamme of mirth.

The elms are fountains of golden pebbles; the
maples burn—
Enchanted splendor of bonfires consuming but
unconsumed;
The aspens are yellow, the oaks are copper: a
Titan's flowers,
The hollyhocks and the goldenglows of the hills
have bloomed.

And the sap of the world hangs rich in the fruit
on the orchard bough:
In golden apple and crimson grape the summer's
blood
(The harvest-home of health and ardor and humor
and joy)
Pours, for recurrent fountain of Eden, its mystic
flood.

The sun is a dreaming God in a drowse of ecstasy
Loitering down the sky like a meadow's pleasant
girth.
The valleys seem like cymbals of bronze and drums
of flame
Beaten to sound the March of Life, the Te Deum
of earth.

Bluer than all the October skies the gentians bloom—
As if lingering summer had gathered the azure of
all her days
And poured it out in her final flower. And elfin gold,
The frosty stars of witch-hazel bloom by the
squirrel's ways.

The peace of fullness, the fruit of power, the
festival
Of lavish Autumn to crown the patience of
Summer is here:

And root and bough, and bud and flower, and tree
and vine,
Are Prometheus come down at last from the
Caucasus of the year!

WINTER NOCTURNE

(For Frederick Pohl)

The constellations are my silver comrades,
And there are moonlit rabbits in the woods
With little cobweb-snowy tails that twinkle—
I am not lonely in these solitudes.

Full moon is blinding white above the tree-tops;
New snow is blinding white upon the road;
The brook is ink and iron that make more brilliant
The cascade's sudden silver episode.

The strong unstirring trees cast metal shadows
Rigid as steel, yet delicate as smoke;
The hills grow massive and yet unsubstantial—
Silver Archangels in the trees' blue cloak.

The strong stern iron woods on the horizon
Become a delicate and lilac haze,
Beneath which gleams the broad and broken silver
Of earth that seems the moon in paraphrase.

The road is like a lonely dazzling highway
Up to the stars, too holy and pure to tread—
I walk it while my spirit towers and trembles,
Lifted by ecstasy, held down by dread.

The widened woods show strange moon-brilliant vistas
Made whiter by black shadows of the trees;
They call me down their chill and silver by-ways
Etched with a net of ebon phantasies.

The lakes are like great cries of exultation
Spoken in silver to the comrade moon:
I wander dazed and dazzled by the splendor
Of whitened water and white plenilune.

Shaken and inarticulate I wander
Almost too wild with beauty to draw breath—
Amid this brilliance, ecstasy, and splendor,
What is the thing called Life, the thing called Death?

I clench my hands, I try to speak, I stumble
Dazed thru Eternity. O terrible night!
O blinding beauty of Earth's silver epic!
O mighty music of symphonic light!

FOR SCHOLARS

My fancies are "excited"—
So good people say:
But the sky's excited
Each time it writes a day!

Earth that made the Dodo
Surely loves a joke.
"Ha!" the thunder shouted
When it hewed the oak.

May makes coral-colored
Metaphors of trees;
August loves the lightning's
White hyperboles.

Tigers are a bonfire—
Burrowing moles are grey.
One should not take a world like this
As donkeys munch their hay.

Sunset is a Burning Bush—
He is in the flame.
If my words are fierce and gay
His peacock is to blame!

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